

# **The COB Method**

University of Montana  
College of Business

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*“Above all, try something”  
-FDR*

## Preamble

The Strategic Planning Committee was charged with envisioning a new way forward for the College of Business. This document grows out of our belief that we must throw out assumptions and re-conceptualize what is possible in business education. At the same time, the ideas in this document are informed by awareness of those things we do well and of those areas in which we seem to operate on autopilot.

At the heart of COB is a student-centric and collaborative culture. Though our culture is strong, change is difficult and in order to move forward, COB must radically rethink the work it does.

First, some ground rules:

1. Every one of us has a role to play in creating, communicating, and delivering value.
2. This plan should drive proactive decision making across COB, not become an after-the-fact tool to justify the existence of programs or initiatives.
3. This was not an “academic exercise.” Implementing this plan will require change in most facets of COB life – we must be willing to embrace change and the potential conflict it brings, rather than fight or ignore it.
4. Make no mistake; the concepts we propose in this strategic document are neither discrete nor linear. A written document cannot adequately communicate the interrelated nature of our thinking.
5. By design, this document flies at different altitudes – in some cases we provide comprehensive implementation plans, in other areas we defer to those who better understand the involved structures and appropriate metrics. We are both prescriptive and vague with intention.
6. Be aware that various proposed and existing COB committees will have to hammer out implementation of this plan. A prime example is our suggestions regarding curriculum, ideas that must be carefully considered by the Curriculum and Student Experience Committee.
7. Strategy is not static. Strategic thinking requires that we live, learn, and adapt.
8. Though we recognize the difficulty of our current budget reality, our ability to access greater resources in the medium-term hinges upon delivering a compelling value proposition to our stakeholders.

The following vision, mission and value proposition present the outcomes we aim to achieve with this strategy. Our four brand pillars act as guiding principles that inform our educational method and the decisions we must make to enact that method. To satisfy our promise of developing well-prepared students, we’ve identified two target student profiles and we focus, for the time being, on expanding and developing three distinct, yet symbiotic career themes: professional services, new venture pursuit, and experience creation.

## Vision

*To create the premier business learning ecosystem and enhance economic development in the Northern Rockies.*

## Mission

*The College of Business creates the opportunity for a better life for our students, faculty, and staff through transformative experiences in and out of the classroom.*

## Value Proposition

The College of Business at the University of Montana delivers transformative learning experiences, propelling our students to make immediate and sustained impact on business and society. Using the COB Method\*, we nurture the innate work ethic of our students to develop capable, confident problem solvers and ethical decision makers.

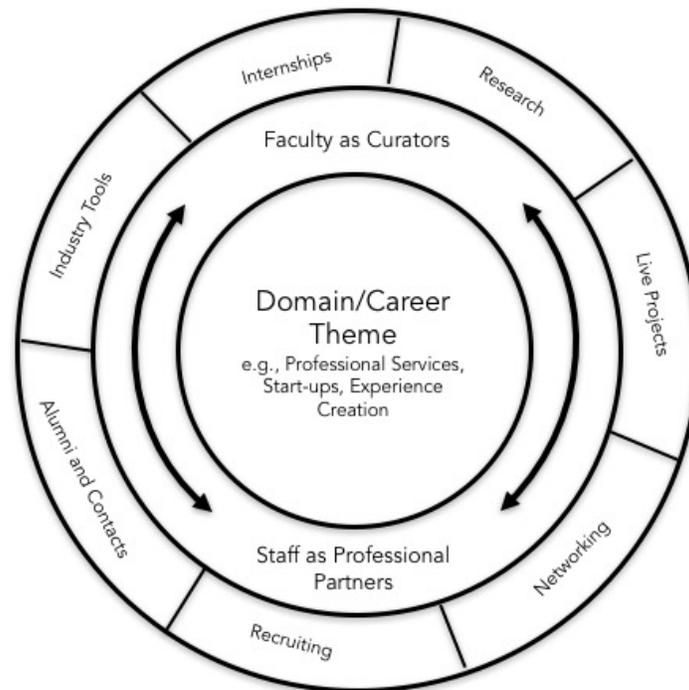
## COB Brand Pillars

The following **brand pillars** drive our value proposition:

- Students first: We educate the whole person
- Experiential learning: We create experiences that matter
- Thought leadership: We create rigorous and relevant knowledge
- Stewardship: We value people, planet and profit

## \*The COB Method

We use an integrated and holistic approach to business education:



Oriented around a specific career theme, such as professional services, new venture pursuit, or experience creation<sup>1</sup>, students move through a set of interdependent learning experiences. Faculty, staff, and students, as well as our external partners, are therefore co-creators of knowledge. To be clear, this approach is not necessarily a prescriptive recommendation for each and every course, but rather a system-level description of our distinctive educational methodology. Operationalizing this approach at the course-level is encouraged whenever appropriate (many courses should be moving toward this), but we recognize that some courses cannot and probably should not incorporate all facets of the COB Method.

To fully realize this method, the following are necessary:

1. Integration: We need to re-think the idea of a course to better deliver an integrated and purposeful series of learning experiences. Students have a tendency to learn something and move on – that’s less a statement about the student and more a result of our system and the incentives it presents. We aren’t carrying threads like we should. We also insist students learn things they won’t need for the long haul. Every course should be an ingredient in a larger recipe, not a box checked and then forgotten. Class by class, our curriculum should foster the application of knowledge and skills from one course into the next. We need to reconsider timing and effectiveness of current course offerings, and eliminate course content or modify timing as needed to produce an educational experience that delivers our value proposition.

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<sup>1</sup> Experience Creation refers to an expanded notion of what is currently known as Entertainment Management. This career theme includes such areas as tourism, sports, hospitality, and customer service.

2. **Agility:** We need to learn and adapt faster. We must foster innovation in our curriculum. Tenure-track faculty are theoretical experts. Clinical professors and adjunct faculty should be a conduit to practice. We have highly engaged alumni and employers able and willing to share their business challenges, priorities, and their talent needs. Curriculum must be a constant dialogue between theory and practice.
3. **Resources:** We need to invest in the COB Method. From classroom technologies that better enable collaboration, to more coordinated staff support, we need to secure resources that will help launch our students' careers. We need deeper investment in faculty and staff development to give each of us the tools we need to advance our collective ambitions and value to COB. We need facilities that we cannot even imagine in this current environment.
4. **People –** We must strategically fill open tenure track lines and staff openings, create several secure clinical professorships, and invest in a deeper staff. We realize the importance of diversity and the advantages of having a diverse work environment. We are committed to diversity in terms of race, color, religion, national origin, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, age, political ideas, marital or family status, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.
5. **Culture –** We all must look forward and inspire each other to innovate. We must harness our collaborative spirit to challenge the status quo.

Right now, we are particularly good at executing the COB Method in the domains of **professional services, new venture pursuit, and experience creation**. We are on the cusp of fully deploying this method in business analytics. Abundant potential also exists in stewardship.

## Target students

Students are the primary beneficiaries of our value proposition; hence we focus on the benefit requirements of two broad groups of students:

### Segment 1: The Explorer/Big Sky Bound

Students seeking a better life right now, looking for purpose and the opportunity to have an impact while experiencing the "last best place" (in and out of state, traditional college students, financially stable, location oriented).

**Positioning Statement:** *To the Explorer, the College of Business at the University of Montana creates the best opportunity to find a passion and develop that passion into a career because of our students-first, experiential focus, culturally vibrant community, and spectacularly beautiful setting.*

### Segment 2: The Bootstrapper/Home Grown

Students seeking an opportunity for a better life (1<sup>st</sup> generation college students, veterans, tribal members, non-traditional students, cost-conscious, etc., likely in state).

**Positioning Statement:** *To the Bootstrapper, the College of Business at the University of Montana creates the most actionable and direct path to a better life because of our relentless focus on successful student experiences in and out of the classroom.*

## How We Get There

The following strategy is structured around four strategic objectives. Under each strategic objective, our tactics are organized into four categories: First Impressions, Organizational Structure, Curriculum, and Facilities.

### Strategic Objective 1: Keep students at the center of all we do

#### **First Impressions**

##### Initiate an application process for new business students

**Challenge:** Incoming UM students have no perception of prestige or sense of belonging to COB when they are admitted to UM. (According to some BAC members).

**Solution:** Pursue direct admission. Students should apply directly to COB when applying to UM. Once the applicant applies and indicates he or she is interested in business, they will be prompted to complete a "business student application." Initially, this will not be an application that we use for admissions, but a way to gather information and make connections with interested students. We can then use this data to engage potential students and promote a welcoming spirit from the College of Business. Hence, students will begin to identify with the College of Business from the moment they submit their application to UM.

The long-term vision is to implement a formal COB direct application process. We can then increase the rigor of the process and be more selective. This is a challenging structural endeavor that involves negotiating with the university and developing internal admissions infrastructure. Making the Introduction to Business (BGEN 105) course required (see below) will help in this process by incorporating the application process into this course.

##### Start a DECA Chapter

**Challenge:** We currently do not offer a collegiate DECA chapter. Many high school students identify with DECA and are interested in joining a collegiate chapter.

**Solution:** Establish a COB DECA chapter. This will provide a fluid transition for incoming students and strengthen their affiliation with COB as freshmen. This will also enable effective recruiting in high school DECA chapters across the region. See details at <https://www.deca.org/college-programs/membership-college>.

## Restart the Ambassador Program

**Challenge:** The once-effective COB Ambassador program has gone dormant.

**Solution:** Bring it back! COB Ambassadors promote goodwill amongst potential students, current students, and professionals. They lead GBB tours and serve as a valuable recruiting tool by providing a welcoming face to potential COB students. Full details on the dormant program are outlined in Appendix 1.

## ***Organizational Structure***

### Restructure COB Administration

**Challenge:** Our current departmental structure creates constraints and internal conflict over the effective and efficient allocation of faculty and resources. This impacts our ability to put students first and to be flexible in response to changing student and market needs. When decisions are made at the department level, it is difficult to develop a curriculum that is truly integrated, maintain focus on the interests of all our students, and be forward thinking.

Although departments certainly help ensure the strength of our majors, notably in Accounting and MIS, the departments are not majors, and majors (or graduate degrees) do not inherently require departments. The MBA has continued to grow without being configured within a single department. We can maintain and strengthen the quality of our majors through the Curriculum and Student Experience Committee (and major committees).

The reality is that 56% (75%) of all undergraduate (MBA) credit hours taught in the College of Business are not exclusive to majors but are instead beneficial and open to students regardless of major. Some classes such as "Introduction to Business", "Business Ethics & Responsibility", the capstone or MBA classes are not specific to a major, and other classes such as "Principles of Marketing" or "Management & Organizational Behavior" are required by all majors. Teaching each of these classes demands allocation of faculty resources from a specific department that in turn triggers concerns about whether departments are bearing an uneven load.

Furthermore, our *students first* commitment encompasses more than what happens in the classroom. The strength of our program and our majors includes the critical role that our faculty and professional staff play in preparing and connecting students to career paths and opportunities. Proactive engagement with employers and students around career paths does not require departments. Equipping our students for diverse and increasingly integrated career opportunities requires flexible collaboration across disciplines in relation to both curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Finally, competing effectively in a rapidly changing environment may necessitate the creation of new innovative classes, programs, certificates, or majors. The current departmental structure may hamper our ability to respond on a timely and effective basis.

**Solution:** Eliminate the current structure of academic departments in favor of two programs: Undergraduate Programs and Graduate Programs. To facilitate this change, we propose the

designation of two associate dean positions. First, the Faculty/Research Associate Dean is responsible for FEC, faculty recruitment, faculty oversight and support, and strategy execution. Second, the Academic Associate Dean, supported by Undergraduate Programs and Graduate Programs Directors, is responsible for all aspects of the student experience. The Curriculum and Student Experience Committee (see below) will report to the Academic Associate Dean; however, the two Associate Deans must collaborate closely on curriculum to ensure we provide a transformative experience for our students. These structural changes are diagramed in Appendix 2.

In concert with eliminating academic departments, Unit Standards need to be unified across COB. Also, the Business Advisory Councils should be reorganized to better align with our strategic objectives and more effectively capitalize on our advisors' time and talents. The Dean's board or "College Board" should be elevated and grown with an explicit focus on fundraising. This board should meet in a format and frequency determined by the Dean. Current departmental boards should be streamlined and broken up into curriculum and domain-oriented task forces, based on COB majors, that will meet as needed. While the College Board is development-oriented, these task forces will serve as a critical conduit to practice and inform teaching, research, and student placement. The task forces will most likely be filled with more junior alumni and friends of COB and could provide a useful development pipeline feeding into the Dean's College Board.

In summary, we contend that the strength of our majors is not the consequence of the departments but of a robust curriculum process, quality teaching, collaboration amongst faculty and professional staff, and engagement with the employer community. We believe that our proposed organizational modifications remove artificial structural and resource constraints, freeing the College of Business faculty and professional staff to execute on integrated curriculum development and our *students first* mission.

## Emphasize "Student Experience" in the Curriculum

**Challenge:** Curriculum debates and decisions often drift from the fundamental focus of what's best for the students.

**Solution:** Add "Student Experience" to the title of the curriculum committee, as a reminder of our promise to deliver transformative experiences and experiential learning. The Curriculum and Student Experience Committee will be a rotating, representative body of faculty and staff. Its revised charge is to ensure that COB curriculum fulfills our mission, vision, and value proposition, with particular regard to integrating experiential learning into every major (not necessarily every class).

## Curriculum

### Align Core with Value Proposition

**Challenge:** The core curriculum at COB is currently out of alignment with our proposed value proposition. Many learning experiences happen in isolation and are focused on first major courses.

**Solution:** Conduct a robust curriculum review. The core must be structured to generate the appropriate learning outcomes at the appropriate times. These learning outcomes should align with our value proposition and career themes and must be reinforced at multiple points in the curriculum.

Steps in this review:

1. Determine the desired content mix and timing for each career theme and identify opportunities for integration across majors.
2. Define our learning goals and identify how and when the curriculum supports students in meeting these learning goals.
3. Identify misalignment – where are we missing our learning goals?
4. Reconstruct the curriculum to maximize desired content, timing, and integration.

The purpose of this review is not to create syllabi by committee for the core, but rather to gain a holistic view of our students' learning experiences and to better understand what we are doing well and what needs improvement.

Guiding philosophy:

We propose adopting a “principles” approach to core courses, rather than a “first majors” approach. This transition could be difficult as most course materials are developed in the “first majors” framework. The principles approach was borne from the hard sciences where students take a principles course in biology, chemistry, and/or physics – before taking a more focused look at topical areas within the discipline. In business, a switch from a first major’s approach to a principles approach might mean changes in how some content is currently delivered, shifting it to the major-specific courses.

As an example, in the upper-core a student’s first exposure to finance is “Business Finance” or “Corporate Finance.” A principle’s approach might involve introducing finance principles and tools in a broader course that integrates personal finance, business finance, investments, banking and risk management topics. A major focus of such a course would still be financial tools (i.e., time value of money), but students might receive a broader perspective on Finance. Similar evaluations of other upper and lower core courses should be performed as well.

Introducing a principles approach to the core could change when students are introduced to a business discipline. Currently students are introduced to Accounting and MIS in the lower core while Management, Marketing, and Finance are delegated to the upper-core. A principles approach may make it possible to move more topics to the lower-core and expose students to majors and disciplines earlier in their academic careers.

Two things should be made clear. First, we want students to have a strong fundamental knowledge of business. Second, we are not proposing reduced rigor. We encourage faculty members teaching core courses to maintain a rigorous approach while shifting the emphasis to principles. We hope this adjustment will also foster development of a more compelling suite of elective courses that are open to non-majors as well as majors.

## Develop Flexible Core

**Challenge:** Our current core is too rigid. This alienates students and stifles engagement. Although difficult to quantify, the rigidity of the core could cause longer times to graduate and reduced pursuit of certificates or double majors.

**Solution:** Reduce rigidity. We need greater flexibility in prerequisites and co-requisites in the core, especially in the progression from the lower to upper cores. Though there is some value in a highly structured core, our current structure creates unnecessary roadblocks for some students trying to progress toward graduation. This will be a primary task of the Curriculum and Student Experience Committee.

## Fill Knowledge and Skill Gaps in the Core

**Challenge:** There are worrisome holes in the core. Too many students are deficient in areas like basic Excel skills, applied statistics, leadership/motivation, and communication skills.

**Solution:** Fill skill gaps. The COB Curriculum and Student Experience Committee should examine if and where these topics are currently taught and develop a solution. A longer-term solution may be to develop these as part of the core courses at COB, or in partnership with other units on campus. If a non-COB course is not fulfilling our needs and faculty of those courses are unwilling or unable to make necessary revisions, the course should be dropped and alternative modes for delivering this content should be identified.

## Update the 120 credit breakdown

**Challenge:** Although an interdisciplinary education has the potential to provide a breadth of non-business knowledge, requiring 60 credits outside of COB is an old artifact of AACSB, no longer required for accreditation.

**Solution:** Relax this requirement. The curriculum committee should propose an alternative policy. Students must still fulfill general education requirements and lower core requirements with classes outside the COB. Eliminating the mandatory 60/60 split will greatly enhance flexibility for students and majors.

## Optimize the Minor

**Challenge:** The current business minor is too big (28 credits), too inflexible (no options), and would benefit from a larger online presence. It was constructed to fit within current curriculum offerings (lower/upper core) without requiring additional resources/courses, and it was originally expected to be a pathway to the business major and the MBA. However, education is evolving. Students are seeking more streamlined paths to credentials. Although the idea of using the minor as a pathway to become a business major is a good one, unfortunately, the goal of attracting new majors has not been realized. The result is an unnecessarily onerous and inflexible business minor. The minor has the potential to deliver a highly valued business credential for degrees across campus.

**Solution:** Make the minor more accessible. We propose using the current MBA foundation courses plus Microeconomics for the minor. This would reduce the credit burden of the minor, dropping it to 18 credits, and eliminate MBA pre-requisite issues for some groups of students (e.g., MBA/Pharmacy). This also enables a flexible format for all courses included in the minor, which is a goal set forth by the online teaching task force. The COB Curriculum and Student Experience Committee would be charged with reviewing this configuration for feasibility and effectiveness. In general, we must evolve to meet the market expectations and needs of our students who do not seek a comprehensive business education, but rather a high-level background in business to supplement their non-COB career path (e.g., journalism, education, etc.). At heart of this proposal is a shift in who we imagine as our audience for the minor.

## *Facilities*

### Modernize Classrooms

**Challenge:** Though the Gallagher Business Building is in good shape for its age, our classrooms are not designed for collaboration and technological integration.

**Solution:** Invest in resources that enable collaboration and experiential learning. Ideas include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Break-out rooms equipped with smart boards and whiteboards.
- Screens in every classroom on which instructor and student content can be seamlessly displayed.
- Wireless projection screens with the ability to connect tablets, PC's, and Macs.
- Technology-enabled collaboration stations in classrooms.
- Moveable chairs and desks in classrooms and study lounges.

## Strategic Objective 2: Make every moment meaningful

### *First Impressions*

#### Reinvent Introduction to Business

**Challenge:** The Introduction to Business class enrolls over 150 students *per semester*, presenting an incredible opportunity to recruit more students to COB. In its current form, this class is not fully realizing the opportunity.

**Solution (Phase 1):** Showcase the best of COB. We propose each business field (e.g., MKT, MIS, Law, Ops, Acct, Finance, MGT, UMEM, IB) assume ownership of a portion of the class in which an expert faculty member in that field presents a small number of “greatest hits” class sessions. To provide coordination amongst faculty and assist with the administrative burden, a dedicated graduate assistant (GA) will administer the class. The GA will be responsible for administrative functions of the class (i.e., attendance, assignments, exams). Faculty members will send the GA questions for exams. This revised format will inject energy into the course, serve as a prime recruiting pipeline to both the major and the minor, and give freshmen a roadmap for how to be successful in college. We can also seek alumni participation in the class as guest speakers.

Costs: Administration of the course will require a minimum of ten GA hours per week. COB should also provide a stipend for faculty members to represent their business field as lecturers in the class (~\$200 per person). A lead instructor should also be assigned (stipend ~\$500). This person will manage the GA, write the syllabus, and own auditing and submission of final course grades. Given the current financial constraints, we suggest identifying a company or a donor to sponsor this class for at least Phase 1. ROAM is a potential candidate for this role.

Other issues to consider: Potential complications arise with teaching evaluations, GA management, obtaining faculty buy-in, determining the optimal faculty and managing egos of professors who aren't invited to participate. We should also consider representing career development and GSSC in the class. This class could be well-suited to panel discussions and/or senior student guest speakers.

Unlike Phase 1 where a GA administers this class, Phase 2 will require allocation of at least a single, full-time faculty member. That is, while the success of the Phase 1 proposal rests on the willingness of faculty members to accept a modest stipend for going beyond their normal teaching loads, it relies heavily on a GA. Though it is immediately implementable, it is likely not sustainable.

**Solution (Phase 2):** Make it experiential. Concurrent with the COB Curriculum and Student Experience Committee's proposed core review, a second phase solution must be developed. This yet-to-be developed version of Introduction to Business should be a required, lower core course for all COB majors and will serve the primary function of getting our students excited about business. Unlike Phase 1, this class will involve a substantial experiential learning component. Students will develop fundamental business knowledge through a fun, interactive, and hands-on experience.

Recommended components of Introduction to Business include:

1. Job shadowing.
2. Balanced treatment of all business majors.
3. Experiential learning – make the students do “real stuff” right away.
4. Senior student mentor.

Issues to consider: Cost for this is an entire faculty member's teaching load for a semester, or perhaps more. It could be difficult to find an enthusiastic teacher that can competently teach all COB fields. Rotation amongst faculty in various business fields is strongly encouraged. If multiple sections are needed, multiple faculty members could rotate sections to deliver different skills and perspectives. Implementation will require thoughtful allocation of teaching loads.

## **Organizational Structure**

### Efficiently Allocate Administrative Functions

**Challenge:** Faculty members are pulled from their core value creation (teaching and research) into numerous administrative functions.

**Solution:** Designate an operations manager responsible for overseeing budgets to align with strategic objectives, and managing financial affairs, events/scheduling, IT, and facilities. In other words, as we restructure COB, we want to minimize the administrative burden on faculty members to more efficiently allocate their time. For more information on the fit of this proposed position, see Appendix 2.

### Redefine Strategic Planning

**Challenge:** In the past strategy has been cyclical and fixed. We chart a course for the years ahead, most often the next AACSB accreditation cycle, and lack the agility to recognize and seize emergent opportunities.

**Solution:** Institute a continuous Strategy and Innovation Committee, to be filled by a rotating, representative body of faculty and staff. The committee's charge is to ensure that COB's strategic planning is ongoing, iterative, and adaptive. Ultimately, the responsibility for implementing strategy lies with the Dean, and this continuous committee will assess results and shape future strategic recommendations. Strategy should also inform our approach to AACSB accreditation, so the requirements of AACSB accreditation should be maintained through a related sub-committee.

*Note: Recruitment of international students, facilitation of study abroad opportunities, transfer of credits from international study, and opportunities for growth in international programs are all important topics that we do not attempt to cover in this document. They should be expeditiously tackled by the newly instituted Strategy and Innovation Committee.*

## **Curriculum**

### Offer More Integrative Majors and Certificates

#### *Part 1*

**Challenge:** Although the current majors support the COB vision, they do not adequately stress career themes or integration.

**Solution:** Accept more electives. Each major should consider accepting more elective courses from other COB majors. Doing so would allow students to develop additional competencies outside of their major and foster a more integrated understanding of business. This would also encourage development of elective courses within majors that generate more cross-disciplinary interest. We recognize that this will not work for all majors or all topics, but several majors already provide this level of flexibility.

## *Part 2*

**Challenge:** Our majors are relatively entrenched and not optimally aligned with the fastest growing job sectors.

**Solution:** Develop a process of constant evaluation, continuously examining opportunities for new majors in high growth employment areas. One such area is Supply Chain Management. Adding a major in this field would add a highly technical major and another STEM program to COB. The Not-for-profit sector is another high growth area in Montana in general, and Missoula, in particular. This sector presents opportunities across all COB disciplines. Responsibility for developing this evaluation process lies with the Strategy and Innovation Committee, though this proposal has broader cultural implications as well.

## Renovate and Grow Graduate Programs

### Part 1

**Challenge:** The current graduate certificates are overdue for reevaluation.

**Solution:** Review all graduate certificates. The current certificates in Entrepreneurship and Entertainment Management require only nine credits, three of which can count toward required electives (per grandfathering). Although we do not wish to make credentialing unduly onerous, our concern is whether so few specialized courses provide adequate depth for a Graduate Certificate. Additional certificate options should also be explored. Possible options include, but are not confined to, Healthcare, Sustainability, Not-for-profit, and Human Resources. These certificates could be taught in-house or in collaborations across campus where feasible.

### Part 2

**Challenge:** COB graduate programs present an untapped growth opportunity.

**Solution:** Expand the MBA, MACCT and MSBA programs. Specifically, as COB graduate programs build an increased online presence through flexible delivery systems, structural limits to program growth are less of a concern. In addition, we encourage COB majors to consider additional MS programs, or tracks under existing programs. Such programs should not be initiated, however, without secure funding models, such as RCM, in place.

Graduate Program Enrollments:

	Current	Possible with Current Resources	Long-term Target
MBA	201	250	400-600
MACCT	33	40	45*
MSBA	23	30	50

*\*based on current strategy*

## Offer Micro-Credentials

**Challenge:** COB has enormous untapped potential to extend its value proposition to more students on campus and throughout the Northern Rockies. Currently, our programs are excessively focused on degree-seeking students, and therefore we are closed off to significant potential revenue streams.

**Solution:** Investigate micro-credentials as an avenue to compliment other units on campus and offer continuing education. These post-baccalaureate programs could be developed around the framework of existing certificates or majors, or customized in response to employer demand. These programs could use online structures similar to the MBA foundation courses.

## Facilities

## Invest in Communication

**Challenge:** Communication with and among students is poor. Students do not reliably check email and Moodle forums are inadequate for collaborative communication.

**Solution:** Promote the adoption of Zoom throughout COB. The Zoom platform is being implemented in the MBA program. It presents opportunities for more effective communication, collaboration, sharing, and facilitation of different interests across varied groups (e.g., career themes, student groups, etc.). We want student discussions to move beyond the boundaries of specific courses.

### Invest in Flexible Delivery

**Challenge:** We lack the facilities and expertise for creating compelling and interactive online content.

**Solution:** Build a creative suite, a studio in which to create innovative and flexible forms of content delivery. As UM adopts the Zoom platform, COB should house one of the few Zoom rooms being built on campus. Hire an expert staff member to facilitate state-of-the-art teaching.

## Strategic Objective 3: Cultivate and communicate relevant new ideas

### *First Impressions*

#### Visit High Schools - We are Montana in the Classroom

**Challenge:** We have little to no presence in Montana high schools.

**Solution:** Engage Montana high schools. Outreach to area high schools indicated there is great opportunity for COB to build connections with area students, teachers, and high school counselors. We could pursue support and funding from "[We are Montana in the Classroom](#)," a University-level program funded by UM's Broader Impacts group, to build increased interaction with prospective students. Participation in this program would provide us with a powerful recruiting presence inside high school classrooms. We should also consider sending out successful alumni into high school classrooms.

#### Leverage Regional Alumni Connections

**Challenge:** Our marketing efforts are not reaching beyond Missoula and expansion is needed to population centers throughout the region (e.g., Billings, Boise).

**Solution:** Develop a mechanism for alumni in cities to host recruiting events for interested students and parents to promote UM and the College of Business. In order to implement this program, we will need to allocate resources to support a pilot program with staff who:

- Obtain lists of interested students in target cities.
- Build and curate lists of alumni/BAC in target cities.
- Train alumni on talking points and marketing materials.
- Coordinate logistics for place and time (i.e., coffee shop, community center).
- Send invitations to students and parents.

- Follow up with pilot participants to assess program efficacy.

Costs: Expected COB costs consist of (1) staff time for the tasks above and (2) promotional materials and swag for the alumni to distribute. Alumni hosts would be approached with the understanding that they would fund the event.

## ***Organizational Structure***

### Define Rigorous and Relevant Thought Leadership

**Challenge:** The role of Thought Leadership at COB is unclear and lacks coordination.

**Solution:** Define what it means to be a scholar at COB and institute a continuous Research and Thought Leadership Committee. Our vision for the broad concept of Thought Leadership and the charge of this committee are discussed Appendix 3.

## ***Facilities***

### Build a Place for Thought Leadership to Happen

**Challenge:** COB currently has no dedicated facilities to enable high-quality research.

**Solution:** The Research and Thought Leadership Committee should seek input from faculty on resources needed to support their research. Some possibilities include buying important datasets, building a behavioral research suite, funding MTurk experimental surveys, etc.

## Strategic Objective 4: Value people, planet, and profit

**Challenge:** Stewardship is a distinctive ethic in our region's culture, and the culture of the university as well. Similarly, people at COB care deeply about serving a mission greater than themselves. Fortunately, this ethic is in high demand in various sectors of the local, regional and national job markets.

**Solution 1:** Elevate this core aspect of our culture and drive related opportunities for our students. Though this strategic plan does not build out specific recommendations for how to do this, stewardship (sustainability, non-profit leadership, etc.) represent a tremendous opportunity. We have the passion and people poised to execute.

**Solution 2:** Evaluate developing stewardship classes, credentials and/or a career theme that equip our students to excel in careers that embrace sustainable principles and business models. Consider stewardship as an additional career theme that prepares students to work for non-profits, health care, sustainable business, etc. Significant opportunities exist to capitalize on programs, capabilities and expertise both on and off-campus, including:

- COB's existing certificate, classes and faculty expertise in sustainability and sustainability reporting.

- Programs and resources under the direction of Scott Mills, Associate VP of Research for Global Change and Sustainability
- College of Forestry and Environmental Studies programs
- Non-profit administration minor/programs
- Masters of Public Administration program
- Alumni, recruiters and Montana businesses/organizations with a strong focus on stewardship principles

*“Hope is not a strategy”*  
-Dean Chris Shook, 12/1/2017

## Appendix 1: COB Ambassador Program (per COB website)

How do COB Ambassadors represent COB?

- Lead GBB tours
- Attend various events on and off campus on behalf of COB
- Connect with potential and new students
- Uphold a professional image
- Interact with professionals visiting COB

What are the Benefits of Being a COB Ambassador?

- Gain a better understanding of UM and COB
- Meet and network with alumni, business leaders, campus community and future students
- Improve communication and leadership skills
- Gain professional experience and exposure - each COB Ambassador will have a student profile posted on the COB webpage.

What are the expectations and responsibilities of COB Ambassadors?

- Attend annual training session
- Lead tours of the GBB
- Work three events per semester (listed below) under direction of the Student Success Center
- Represent COB in a professional manner while interacting with alumni, advisory board members, employers, donors and all VIP guests
- Recruit new members, including working a booth in the GBB lobby
- Participate in at least one community volunteer project per year
- Assist with creation, maintenance and updating of promotional materials
- Encourage potential students to consider COB

What events require COB Ambassador assistance and participation?

Typical events:

- Welcome Feast on the Oval (occurs the first Friday of the semester)
- UM Days (2-4 per semester)
- Greeters for Speaker Forums (2-3 per semester)
- Orientation Sessions (1 prior to fall and spring semesters, with 2-3 additional in summer)
- New Student Phone-a-Thon
- High School Career Days
- Intro to Business class panels
- VIP Visits

What are the Criteria to Become a COB Ambassador?

COB Ambassadors are volunteers chosen through a competitive process. The group will represent diversity in majors, hometowns, academic backgrounds, and academic classification. COB Ambassadors will have excellent verbal and written communication skills and be well-rounded students. They will be professional, prompt, and reliable in their commitments.

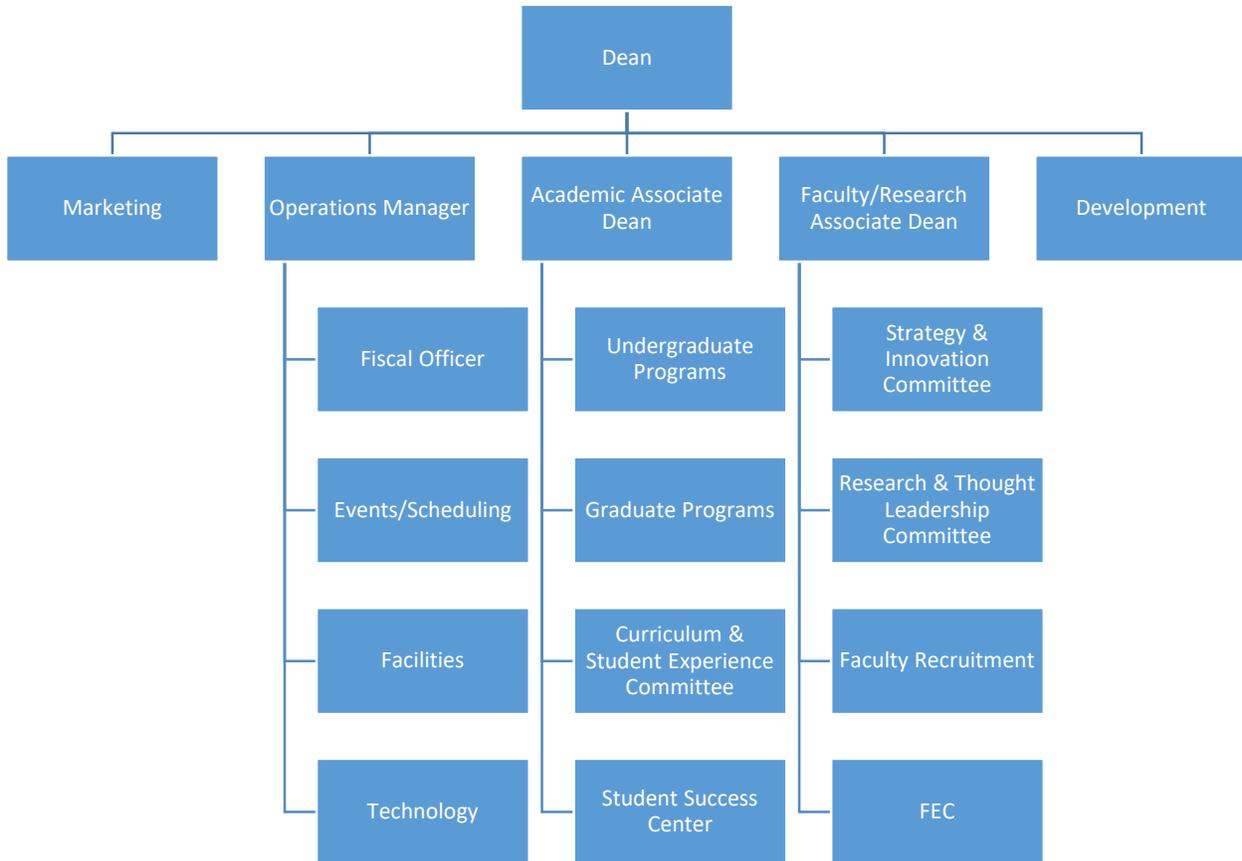
- Must be a currently enrolled COB student
- GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Must commit to the expectations and responsibilities listed above

Application Process:

Inaugural group will be 16 students, to be comprised of:

- 6 juniors/seniors chosen from the Dean's Student Advisory Council – 1 each from BAP, Finance Club, UM AMA, and MISA, plus 1 other SAC member. This group will be the Senior Ambassadors and assist in selecting the remaining inaugural cohort.
- 5 additional junior students (2-3 semesters left)
- 5 freshman/sophomore students (more than 3 semesters left)

## Appendix 2: Proposed Organizational Structure



### DEAN

- Lead the College and engage with University leadership, external stakeholders and alumni
- Develop strategy
- Provide guidance and direction to Associate Deans and Operations Manager
- Oversee Fundraising; Marketing & Communications
- Facilitate the Development & Student Recruiting Advisory Council

### OPERATIONS MANAGER

- Oversee budgets, financial affairs, events/scheduling, IT, and facilities

### ACADEMIC ASSOCIATE DEAN

- Oversee academic programs that are aligned with COB's vision, mission, and value proposition.
- Create and sustain the transformative student experience.

#### ***Responsibilities:***

- Oversee Undergraduate Programs, Graduate Programs, Curriculum and Student Experience committee, Assessment, International Programs, and Student Success Center
- Support COB pillars and career themes in collaboration with Director of Student Success Center
- Determine faculty teaching assignments in collaboration with Faculty/Research Associate Dean
- Oversee class scheduling
- Coordinate course evaluations
- Develop teaching methods and resources
- Manage and respond to student complaints/concerns
- Facilitate the Curriculum and Student Experience and Career Development and Internships Advisory Councils

The Student Success Center facilitates all aspects of the student experience, including:

- Student recruiting
- Admissions/enrollment
- Advising
- Career development
- Internships and experiential learning opportunities
- Scholarships

#### **FACULTY & RESEARCH ASSOCIATE DEAN**

- Coordinate the recruitment and motivation of a faculty body whose skills and interests are equipped to deliver COB's curriculum and whose research and service interests, and activities are aligned with COB's vision, mission, and value proposition.

##### ***Responsibilities:***

- Oversee faculty tenure, progression, retention and performance appraisal in conjunction with Dean
  - Oversee Strategy and Innovation Committee and Research and Thought Leadership Committee
  - Oversee AACSB process in collaboration with Strategy and Innovation Committee. Aim to develop and implement strategy first, then follow up to integrate AACSB requirements
  - Maintain Unit Standards
  - Oversee faculty recruitment (subject to Dean approval)
  - Determine faculty teaching assignments in collaboration with Academic Associate Dean
  - Provide guidance, oversight and support to faculty research
  - Facilitate Strategy and Innovation Advisory Council
- Note: We are severely understaffed. Our wonderful staff members have been incredibly flexible in triaging tasks as needed. As a result, people are doing tasks that don't really match the strategic directives of their positions. As soon as funding becomes available for COB to hire additional staff members, we recommend taking the opportunity to reassess responsibilities to ensure that all tasks are allocated strategically and with maximum efficiency.



## Appendix 3: Research at the College of Business

The primary operationalization of **Thought Leadership** is transformative academic research. It serves our mission in three ways:

1. Research improves lives - it helps people make better decisions and create more effective policies.
2. Research contributes to our rankings and reputation (both external and internal to UM).
3. Research active faculty members often excel at teaching.

Tension between research and teaching is a feature of our system, not a bug. Balancing this tension is a team effort and a one-size-fits-all approach misdirects the strengths and weaknesses of our diverse faculty.

Current COB Baseline Expectations:

All faculty members are expected to maintain their scholarly qualifications as stipulated by AACSB. In turn, COB will prioritize support for this core job function by paying for association fees, conference travel, appropriate journal submission fees, and other base research expenses. **The current level of support for research is not consistent with this basic compact.**

In the following sections, we present a broad vision of the cultural, structural, and resource investments we recommend to clarify the role of research at COB.

Structural Constraints to Change:

Our current structure creates significant barriers to change. Our unit standards define the quality and quantity of research required to achieve promotion and tenure. Teaching loads, however, are defined by the Dean. Any attempt to raise research expectations under the current system cannot be done in a holistic fashion. The system puts faculty members, particularly pre-tenure faculty members, in the position of negotiating against themselves. We would like to see a flexible teaching load system that does a better job of incentivizing high quality research, while protecting junior faculty members and supporting senior faculty members who often carry a disproportionate service load. The path to negotiating that is unclear.

Rigor and Relevance:

COB is not an R1 institution, nor should it aspire to be. We have a mix of interests and ambitions situated in a collegial culture that fosters a unique brand of academic freedom. Some faculty are interested in advancing theory, others focus on informing practice, while others work to improve pedagogy. All add value to COB and should be supported.

Rigor and relevance vary across and within these three types of research. Rigor and relevance are the guardrails and faculty are free to pursue their interests and passions with these parameters in mind. Research published in an A journal is likely rigorous, but that does not necessarily mean it is relevant. Similarly, pedagogical research is likely relevant, but that doesn't mean it is rigorous.

*What is Rigorous?* Rigor is inadequately defined in our current system. Unit standards of the various departments require three peer-reviewed papers. AACSB has encouraged COB to be more specific and selective with both research quality and quantity. We strongly value academic freedom and want all faculty members to have multiple acceptable outlets in which to publish, faculty members should be encouraged to aim for higher quality journals. No journal list or ranking system is perfect, but collectively these ranked lists provide a good starting point for establishing journal quality. We therefore recommend that all COB researchers strive to publish in a journals classified within the top three categories by the [ABDC](#), [ABS](#), SCIMago, or other appropriate journal list. **To be clear, we do not recommend raising the standards of research unless the proper resources are provided from the University or College of Business (see resource requirements above).** In line with AACSB standards, we consider intellectual contributions anything that makes a positive impact on business theory, teaching, or practice.

Additionally, faculty members should be free to target alternative outlets, provided they can make a case for the outlet's quality. If a publication is not on one of these lists (e.g., a journal from a different field), the researcher is welcome to make a compelling case for a publication's rigor with metrics like Impact Factor, acceptance rate, SCImago rating, eigenfactor, etc. We also encourage interdisciplinary research between departments and across campus. It is up to the faculty member to justify the quality of the publication if that target journal is not in an appropriate list of journals as mentioned above.

*What is Relevance?* Relevance should be more explicitly defined in our unit standards and our culture. Relevant research should change business practice or pedagogy and improve lives. We encourage COB scholars to pursue research questions that align with our external mission, and internal value proposition and brand pillars. We also encourage a more active interface with regional businesses, COB alumni, donors, and other appropriate partners in the research process (problem identification, data collection, etc.). In addition to establishing relevance, this might also catalyze funding opportunities.

As a critical complement to the traditional refereed journal publication process, researchers are strongly encouraged translate their findings into a form and format suitable for a non-academic, business audience. These activities could include writing a follow-up article for outlets like [Harvard Business Review](#), Sloan Management Review, [The Conversation](#), or other similarly accessible platforms, including local and regional outlets. In addition, faculty members are encouraged to cultivate their reputations as experts on issues relevant to practice. This can be done through media appearances/comments as well as invited speaking and teaching. Engagement in these activities will elevate the impact of our work, deepen our connections with the community, and enhance the standing of COB on and off campus.

## Implementation

A Research and Thought Leadership Committee should be reconstituted and issued a new charge:

1. To develop a recommended set of unified COB unit standards that reflect the Thought Leadership pillar as outlined above.
2. To specify and/or develop appropriate metrics for rigor and relevance.
3. To oversee a system similar to the Spring 2017 fellowship/professorship application process, with a more explicit emphasis on demonstrating rigor and relevance in the application.
4. To establish and oversee a research grant application process. The purpose of these grants is to sustain research activity and invest in potential, be it the research agenda of an up and

coming scholar or the desire of a senior faculty member to reengage in research in the face of a heavy service load. We therefore recommend creating two broad types of grants:

- a. Early career: grants for junior scholars developing a promising research agenda. Grants could come in the form of a salary enhancement, summer support, research budget (travel, data, etc.), or a course buy-out.
- b. Late career: grants for senior faculty launching new research streams. Grants could come in the form of salary enhancement, summer support, research budget (travel, data, etc.), or a course buy-out.

The committee should be made up of a rotating, diverse set of faculty, fluent in the various categories of research.

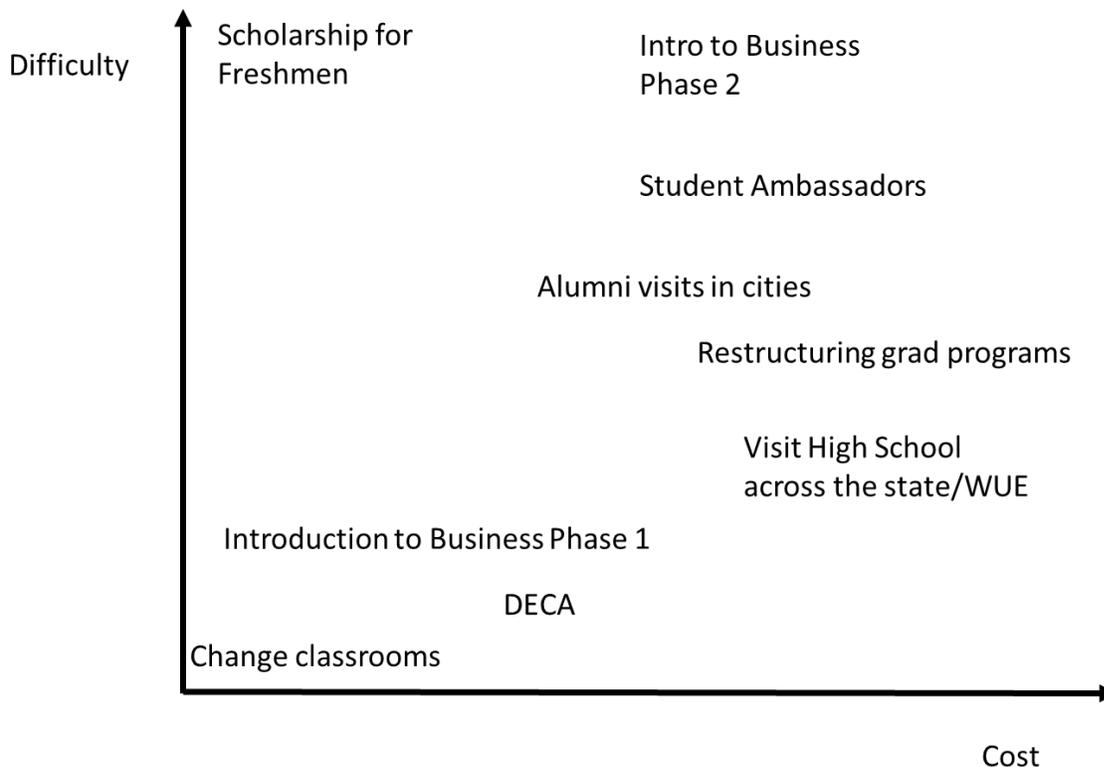
#### Research-Teaching Balance:

This is largely a false dichotomy. The winners of our teaching awards are regularly our most active researchers; however, our 3-3 teaching load - a decidedly teaching-heavy work allocation – impedes research activity. A faculty member seeking a lower teaching load is not looking to work less, just work differently. Faculty members wanting to shift their work allocation more toward research should drive that ambition by pursuing funding to buy down teaching. COB, in turn, should support this flexible work allocation in four ways:

1. Fund course releases internally with grants and fellowships. We ask the Dean to place high priority on fundraising for additional and more secure grants and fellowships.
2. Provide administrative guidance and support for grant searches and applications.
3. Encourage and recognize interdisciplinary collaborations with academic areas traditionally more reliant on grant funded research.
4. Consider a flexible, individualized teaching load system.

## Appendix 4: First Impressions Supplement

Figure: First Impressions tactics mapped according to expected difficulty and cost.



Other first impressions ideas: We believe these things would be nice to have in the future.

- Align student jobs to student careers whilst they are in school
- Future students
  - Business Fridays (MSU Friday's – bring high school students in to WOW them)
- Student Success center -> freshmen come to us first.
- Chat capabilities on the COB website
- Women in Business club
- MBA growth – non-matriculating students (delivery skills, micro credits)
- Student engagement
  - New Major Celebration (major fair)
  - Econ Scream (a student rite of passage)
  - Mid Semester Party
- Fundraising for charities (Challenge 4 Charity, St. Jude's)
- Brand Pillars – sponsor brand pillars outside the school building
- Block Schedule to have lunch time off for meetings, etc.

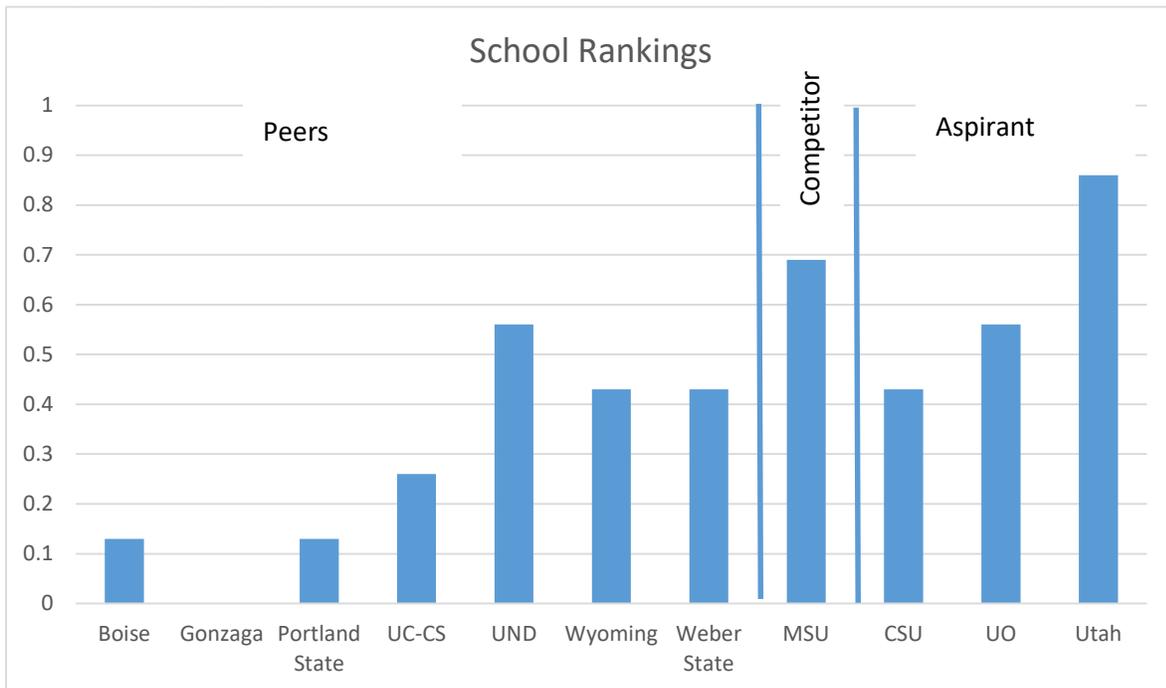
## Appendix 5: Peer, Competitor, and Aspirant School Comparisons

As part of this initiative, we compared our proposed strategic plan to peer, competitor, and aspirant schools. We describe the methodology and present the results below.

Following our AACSB lists, we examined the following schools in the region as our peers: Boise State, Gonzaga, Portland State, University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, University of North Dakota, Wyoming, and Weber State. We identified our competitor as Montana State University. Our aspirant schools include Colorado State University, University of Oregon, and the University of Utah.

We obtained the mission statement, vision statement, strategic goals, first impressions, product offerings, majors, minors, certificates, and accreditation information for each of the schools. We identified five criteria that are important to our strategy and weighed each criterion. The criteria (including the weights) are: transformative experience (30%), experiential learning (30%), students first (13%), stewardship (13%), and thought leadership (13%). We analyzed each school against these five criteria and assigned that school a 1 if the criterion was mentioned specifically or in spirit (e.g., hands-on learning would be acceptable for experiential learning). Otherwise, the school received a score of 0 for that criterion. We then applied the weights to each criterion and added the weighted scores for each school. If a school scored a 1 then that school would have an exact fit with our strategy.

The results are below:



Disclaimer: The indicator score of 1 and 0 were only included if the phrase was mentioned on their website. It is not possible to determine whether the criteria are being implemented or assess the quality of their implementation.